

Message Text

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ACTION AF-08

INFO OCT-01 EUR-12 ISO-00 CIAE-00 INR-07 NSAE-00 PM-04
NSC-05 SP-02 SS-15 PRS-01 USIA-06 TRSE-00 AID-05 EB-08
/074 W

-----151027Z 036083 /23-12

R 150640Z MAR 77

FM AMCONSUL ASMARA

TO SECSTATE WASHDC 4417

AMEMBASSY ADDIS ABABA

INFO AMEMBASSY KHARTOUM

AMEMBASSY LONDON

AMEMBASSY MOGADISCIO

AMEMBASSY NAIROBI

CINCUSNAVEUR LONDON

COMNAVTELCOM WASHDC

USCINCEUR VAIHINGEN

COMIDEASTFOR

NAVCOMMUNIT ASMARA

NAVCOMMSTA NEA MAKRI

CNO WASHDC

C O N F I D E N T I A L ASMARA 0205

E.O. 11652: GDS

TAGS: PINS ET

SUBJECT: THE MASSAWA CONVOY

REF: ASMARA 0184 (DTG 090935Z FEB 77)

1. THE LONG-AWAITED MASSAWA CONVOY DEPARTED ASMARA ABRUPTLY LATE SATURDAY MORNING (MARCH 12) AND RETURNED WITHOUT INCIDENT SUNDAY AFTERNOON. A CONGEN FSL DRIVER WHO ACCOMPANIED THE CONVOY ON THE ROUNTRIP PROVIDED SOME VALUABLE OBSERVATIONS ABOUT THE OPERATION OF THE CONVOY.

2. THIS CONVOY TO MASSAWA CONSISTED OF SOME 100 TRUCKS, PERHAPS
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40 FUEL TANKERS AND 60 GENERAL CARGO TRUCKS. WHILE ALL THE TANKERS WERE EMPTY TO MASSAWA, THE CARGO TRUCKS CARRIED FLOUR, CEREALS, EDIBLE OIL, BEER AND SOME MANUFACTURED PRODUCTS SUCH AS SHOES, CLOTHING AND TEXTILES. THE RETURN CONVOY TRANSPORTED VARIOUS TYPES OF POL, AND SMALL QUANTITIES OF SUGAR, SALT, BERBERE (RED PEPPER) AND CEMENT. THE CONVOY WAS ESCORTED FROM ASMARA BY 20 TRUCKLOADS (ABOUT 400 MEN) OF TROOPS AND SIX ARMORED PERSONNEL CARRIERS

(APC). THE TROOPS WERE FROM THE 115TH BATTALION (BN) WHICH WAS FORMED FROM TROOPS RECRUITED IN THE ADDIS AREA AND HAS BEEN IN ASMARA ONLY ABOUT THREE MONTHS. THIS WAS THE FIRST TIME THIS UNIT HAD PERFORMED ESCORT DUTY, AND THEY CLAIMED THAT FUTURE CONVOYS WOULD AGAIN BE ESCORTED BY THE 31ST BN CURRENTLY ON TEMPORARY DUTY IN KEREN. AT GHINDA AN ADDITIONAL 9 TRUCKLOADS OF TROOPS JOINED THE ESCORT FORCE.

3. THE CONVOY TRAVELED BOTH DIRECTIONS IN ACCORDANCE WITH THE FOLLOWING PROCEDURE: NORMAL SPEED FROM ASMARA TO NEFASIT, LEAP-FROGGING OPERATION WITH APCs LEADING AND TROOPS DEPLOYED ON BOTH FLANKS FROM NEFASIT TO GHINDA, NORMAL SPEED FROM GHINDA THROUGH DONGOLO BASSO, AND THEN LEAPFROG OPERATIONS AS FAR AS THE EPMG OUTPOST AT MAI ATALA AT THE FOOT OF THE ESCARPMENT, AND THEN FULL SPEED INTO MASSAWA. THIS PROCEDURE CAUSED THE CONVOY TO TAKE SEVEN HOURS DOWN TO MASSAWA AND SIX HOURS FOR THE RETURN, A DISTANCE OF 130 KM. ALONG THE ROAD THERE WERE SKELETONS OF SOME 20 TRUCKS BURNED OUT FROM PREVIOUS INCIDENTS, BUT THE NUMBER OF MINE CRATERS STILL EVIDENT WAS VERY FEW.

4. MASSAWA WAS CALM AND QUIET AND THERE DID NOT APPEAR TO BE ANY UNDUE TENSION OR CONCERN AMONG EPMG GARRISONS ALONG THE ASMARA-MASSAWA ROAD. IN GHINDA WHERE THE CONVOY GENERALLY STOPS TO REST FOR AN HOUR, THE LOCAL INHABITANTS HAD JUST ORGANIZED A FAREWELL PARTY FOR THE LOCAL COMMANDER, LT. COL. SEMEYA, WHO WAS BEING TRANSFERRED TO ASMARA. THERE WAS SOME CONCERN EXPRESSED BY THE ERITREAN INHABITANTS THAT HIS REPLACEMENT WOULD NOT BE AS UNDERSTANDING AND FAIR IN ADMINISTERING THE AREA.

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5. COMMENT: IT IS APPARENT FROM THESE OBSERVATIONS THAT, AT THIS POINT, THE SOLE REASON FOR THE INFREQUENCY OF THE MASSAWA CONVOYS IS THE RELUCTANCE OF THE EPMG TROOPS TO PERFORM ESCORT DUTY. THERE WAS NO EVIDENCE OF AN INSURGENT THREAT TO CLOSE THE ROAD, WHICH REMAINS ASMARA'S ONLY SURFACE LINK (VIA SEA TO ASSAB) WITH THE REMAINDER OF ETHIOPIA.
SLUTZ

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NNN

Message Attributes

Automatic Decaptioning: X
Capture Date: 01-Jan-1994 12:00:00 am
Channel Indicators: n/a
Current Classification: UNCLASSIFIED
Concepts: EQUIPMENT, TRUCKS, HIGHWAY TRANSPORTATION
Control Number: n/a
Copy: SINGLE
Sent Date: 15-Mar-1977 12:00:00 am
Decaption Date: 01-Jan-1960 12:00:00 am
Decaption Note:
Disposition Action: RELEASED
Disposition Approved on Date:
Disposition Case Number: n/a
Disposition Comment: 25 YEAR REVIEW
Disposition Date: 22 May 2009
Disposition Event:
Disposition History: n/a
Disposition Reason:
Disposition Remarks:
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Drafter: n/a
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Executive Order: GS
Errors: N/A
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From: ASMARA
Handling Restrictions: n/a
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Litigation History:
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